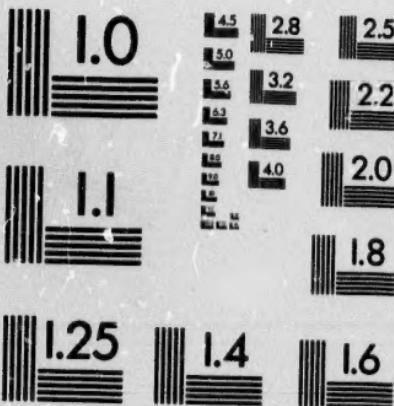


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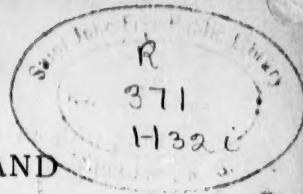
IDEAL SCHOOL DISCIPLINE, AND HOW TO SECURE IT.

By G. U. HAY, PH.B., ST. JOHN, N.B.

When I was invited to read a paper before this Association, I felt that it would be both an honor and a pleasure to comply with the request. But the preparations for the close of a year's work and of final examinations bring so many perplexities in their train, that you will all agree with me when I state that such is not the time to prepare a thoughtful paper, nor such a one as should engage the attention of a body of thinkers and critics like this. I trust, therefore, that you will be as forbearing and generous as you are thoughtful and critical; and for my part, I shall be brief, and shall not, I hope, weary you with many dull platitudes on a somewhat trite subject—"School Discipline, and How to Secure it." "School Discipline" has a somewhat forbidding sound to us at a time when we have turned our backs upon the class-room,—when we from the East join hands with those of the West, either for the first time, or to renew the pleasant associations of other years,—and that, too, in the city of Montreal, which has so many features of interest and beauty, and which for some of us calls up many pleasing recollections of former visits. But your committee, when they sent me this subject, sugar-coated the title in a most inviting way: "*Ideal School Discipline.*" My eye became riveted on the first word, and in a moment of weakness I fell an easy victim. For what time is there or what state of mind that that word "*ideal*" does not come to us like the remembrance of a pleasant dream, recalling the fancies of childhood, or perhaps the high aims and resolves that animated us on the first day of beginning our life-work. When at the close of a day's work all the petty trials and discouragements of life seem to have been crowded together in that one day, may we not shut them out and turn again and again to our ideal—our high resolves—and gain strength to endeavor to realize them.

It is in this spirit that I should like to discuss this question—"Ideal School Discipline, and How to Secure it." And if I treat it too much from the ideal rather than the practical standpoint, it is because my lot has been cast in pleasant places in this connection, and because I have seen, I hope, many ideals realized.

As the ideal is individual rather than general—and fortunately it is so—I fear that I may not be able satisfactorily to define my subject, and



thus, with an unsubstantial base, rear a faulty structure. From the second part of the title as given me,—“How to Secure it,” I infer that I am expected to treat the subject in a restricted rather than a general way; to speak of what constitutes the maintenance of good order, of the proper guidance of the conduct of the pupils, so that in all the exercises of their every-day life the result shall be the happy and harmonious development of the moral, intelligent and physical natures of those committed to our care; and even in this limited sense the subject admits of a wide treatment on account of the many ideals as to what constitutes good discipline, for the methods of discipline are as varied as the instincts of human nature, and they must ever vary to suit individual natures and the circumstances in which we may be placed. The ideal of one teacher may be the quiet school where everything proceeds with the regularity of clock-work, where a whisper or a fall of a book is regarded as a penal offence. Another's ideal may be the busy, noisy school, where the utmost licence is allowed, consistent, of course, with the performance on the part of the pupils of the required work. Both of these ideals—extremes we may call them—are faulty. To gain the uniformity of the one would sacrifice the individuality of the child for a dull mechanism; to tolerate the other would be to restrict education to the acquisition of knowledge—a part only of what constitutes a true education. Our ideal school discipline must be that which has its mainspring in the mutual love and respect of teacher and pupil; which assures the industry and attention of pupils by maintaining good order in the school-room and exciting their zeal and a love for knowledge; and which prevents or represses all irregularities of conduct and tends to train resolute wills, steadiness of purpose, and characters capable of self-control. This course of discipline not only assures the actual government of the pupils while members of the school, but in the broader sense it is a training for the duties of citizenship. It teaches pupils to govern themselves and shape their life-work after they shall have left school. Further, such a discipline, founded upon love, duty, mutual respect, will extend the influence of the school to the entire community, or, as in Rugby under Arnold or Uppingham under Thring, to a whole empire.

The example of the Great Teacher of mankind is ever present to us, animating us when our ideal seems a failure. We look upon that life with its trials, its sufferings, its accomplishment. Every incident in it has its lesson of duty, forbearance, denial of self for the sake of others—while the exceeding love of this Great Teacher is the lode-stone which must ever attract us if we would gain inspiration and strength to carry out our cherished ideals.

The ideal school discipline then will be that which makes the acquisition of knowledge go hand in hand with the zealous discharge of duty because it is duty; the subduing of all selfish and personal feelings, and making them subordinate to duty; the teaching of habits of industry, self-control, repressing idle and mischievous tendencies, and in their stead calling out higher motives, thus training for the larger world without the school-room. Finally, that love which loses sight of self and reaching downward and outward lifts up others. One thought in the valedictory of a graduating class a few weeks ago occurs to me—"Surely, there never was a class more closely bound together by sympathy and friendship than ours. Any honor conferred upon one of its members has ever been to one and all a matter of hearty congratulation, and any sorrow falling to the lot of one of our members was the grief of all." I like to see such a sentiment as this in a class going forth from the school.

How to secure Ideal School Discipline: I would group all the means by which we may secure this under two heads: *First*, There must be love and respect between teacher and pupil. *Second*, The pupil must be in sympathy with his environment.

In regard to the first, I have said before that the mainspring of action in a school, the life that enters into all its exercises, whether of work or play, is mutual love and a sympathy of aim. Indeed, if we had these,—a mutual love founded upon mutual respect, a sympathy of aim, with that aim useful, unselfish and inspiring,—we might say that these comprehend everything, and everything else is included in them. And I use the word love in its highest and best acceptation, that which springs from duty, from respect, from obedience, gently but firmly insisted upon, from repressing those inclinations of the child that are shown to be wrong and mischievous in their tendency, and insistence at all times on the performance of right because it is right; that love which is a response to a hearty and spontaneous approval, on our part, of work performed, of duty conscientiously fulfilled. Is it not your experience that pupils respond, slowly perhaps, but surely, to these incentives? I remember, a few days ago, on rising to address a meeting of teachers in St. John, I saw before me my first school teacher. Her presence was an inspiration to me; for what I remembered chiefly was her generous approval of what was right,—her quiet but marked disapproval of what was wrong.

In this connection let me speak of the importance of drawing inspiration from ideals. These ideals may be those great teachers of the

world, and they may be also from our co-workers and associates of every day. The ideal which we must have constantly before us because it includes all others is that of the Great Teacher of mankind. The higher our ideal, the more will it accord with His teaching and practice. The great teachers of the world—the Arnolds and the Thrights—are ideals to us because they have His life and precepts so indelibly stamped on their own life and work. But those who have been our own teachers directly, and those who are associated directly with us as co-workers, and to whose devotion we are a daily witness—these, I say, are the ones also who inspire us with zeal and strength and patience when we would falter in our task. They aid us by sympathy and example, and they are our best friends in the time of our greatest need.

And just here I would like to say a good word for friends we have always with us. They are scarcely friends of the ideal stamp—on the contrary, they are very real. These are our defeats and our discouragements. They are most unwelcome guests when they first intrude themselves upon us, and possibly they shatter many an ideal for us. But if our ideal is of the right stamp, these are the friends who help us to realize it. Discouragement comes to us when we do not see at once the full fruition of our hopes, our work. It is a slow process this building up of character and intellect. We expect results too soon, and we are discouraged because we do not see them. What we expect to accomplish in a few days or weeks can only be accomplished after many years or perhaps in a life-time. I am sure we do not realize even a small measure of what we attempt to do,—and so discouragement comes; but that very discouragement is the greater incentive to achieve what we have attempted if our ideal is the true one. And everyone of us as we recall past experiences knows full well the sweet uses of adversity. And so it is with defeat. Our most cherished and brilliant schemes fail. So crushing is the defeat sometimes, that all our strength, patience, faith are required to rise again and put on a firm front. But how do we know what is in us until we do meet with defeat? How many of us can recall what blessings these twin friends—defeat and discouragement—have been to us, how they have disciplined us and thus helped us to discipline others.

One ideal in school discipline we often fail to realize; and the failure to realize it comes from not putting ourselves often enough in the pupil's place. This ideal seems to regard the pupil as conscious of his own interest and comprehending his duty to work and obey as a matter of

course, and because it is, from the teacher's standpoint, *his interest* so to do. But mature men and women are not always capable of thus directing themselves, and we cannot expect children to do it. Some few may be able to do so, because their natural instincts are to be dutiful and yield a ready obedience, which instincts have been supplemented by careful home training. These are always the helpers, directly or indirectly, of the teacher. Happy if he does not consider them the only pupils *who can be trained*. In that case *they* are the real leaders of the school. The master of the school is only a figure-head. The *teacher* must be the guide and directing power of the school. The body of teachers in the world—and when I speak of teachers I mean teachers in the most comprehensive sense—must be the guides and directors of the world. This is the highest and broadest ideal we can have, and fortunate it will be for the world when the blind guides—the masters, the lesson hearers—shall be made to see, or if hopelessly blind they shall have been eliminated from this great body.

To secure the ideal school discipline the pupil must be in sympathy with his environment. If we ask ourselves what is the object of a school course, a multitude of answers might be given, the substance of which could be summed up briefly in this statement: it is the preparation for the active duties and responsibilities of life, and it is the preparation, too, for the life beyond this. Now, have we the shadow of a doubt that it was the purpose of a good and all-wise Creator that we should extract as much happiness as possible from this world of ours—and it is a beautiful world—while we live in it? And that this happiness that we get from the world should be reflex in its influence,—that it should enrich us and those with whom we are brought in daily contact? And if we grant the truth of this, it will be easy to show that we should be able to put our pupils in sympathy with their environment. And if we can be the means of securing for the little world that we are called upon daily to guide and direct the fullest and most harmonious development of their moral, physical and intellectual powers, then we shall have accomplished a great good. But that is a very exalted ideal and one very difficult of attainment, even if we had the pupil under our eyes for a much larger proportion of the twenty-four hours than we have. But the more exalted our ideal and the more difficult it is of attainment, the greater will be our elevation if we strive to attain it. Our efforts may be attended with defeat and discouragement, and we may not be permitted to gain even a glimpse of this ideal promised land—that development of body and mind and spirit that I have spoken of. But the unselfish worker must be trained to endure slow and even imperceptible

growth. The seed that we plant in the earth, are we responsible for its growth and perfection? No; our duty is to nourish it, to watch and to wait.

Some of the means to place the pupils in sympathy with their environment.—One great means is to make them accustomed to work, and, I was going to say, plenty of it. But there is an impression among us down by the sea, and I think I have heard it whispered in other parts of Canada, that there are too many subjects taught in the schools; that the teacher is a task-master, and is laying heavy tasks and grievous to be borne on the boys and girls. No, that is not a fact. There may be some lesson-hearers who are hard task-masters, who are undermining the constitutions and stultifying the intellects of the boys and girls by a system of cram and useless memorizing. But teachers are not doing their work that way. They are teaching their pupils to think and to work; and such tasks are too inspiring to be burdens. When you enter a school and see the impress of thought and earnestness on the faces before you, that is an index of the quality of the work that is being done there. And what a source of inspiration that is, is it not? to make every face before you bear the impress of honest effort, of mental activity. Is there any effort to maintain a proper discipline there? No. Was there any effort to secure it at first? Ah, yes, great efforts, efforts that only those twin friends of ours—defeat and discouragement—could help us to maintain and persevere in. That is the kind of discipline that goeth not out except by work and faith. If you have faith that you can do the hardest thing in the world and then set to work to accomplish it, you will remove mountains—of ignorance, disorder, inattention. Now, what is this hardest work? It is teaching the average boy and girl to think—the *average* boy and girl. Let us not be deceived into imagining we are doing this if we are leading along the half dozen or so of bright pupils who would think if left to themselves, or at least who would think in a mediocre way sufficient to satisfy the schoolmaster. Do not the vacant looks of the majority appeal to us to come over and help *them*? How long shall we resist the appeal? How many teachers are there yet jostling and swaying in the crowds along the plains at the foot of the mountain? It is the first step that costs, and they have not taken that step to climb to the tableland above, across which is moving that orderly procession of thinkers and workers, their thoughts and work keeping pace with their orderly march and preparing them to scale the greater heights beyond. Now, what, I repeat, can we do, not only for the average boy and girl, but for those of the lowest capacity,—for the idle, the indifferent, the shirks? Some of them, nay, all of them, perhaps, will do anything ex-

cept to think, to observe. They will appropriate and repeat the thoughts of others, and they will not have the remotest idea that they are committing petty larceny. They will read for you, or they will stumble along over the printed page ; they will work out problems in arithmetic provided they know what the answer is ; they will memorize pages of the text-book, but they will not think. The plain at the foot of the mountain is good enough for them, they argue, if it is good enough for their master ; and the master says it is good enough for him, for, good easy soul, he sits in his chair, and points complacently to the mountain, and says, "Come, boys, climb."

And yet these dull ones are not dull outside of the school. Whose fault is it that they are dull in school ? I was in a school a few weeks ago where a class was being instructed in geometry ; there was plenty of time for thought, an interest, a closeness of attention that never flagged for a moment. There were, in general, just conclusions drawn. Where there was a wrong or impotent conclusion, a just one was reached with admirable patience and skill, but it had to be reached by the pupil from previous steps, no matter what time it took. "There is a lad," said the teacher, "who has been in the school a year ; he was the personification of dullness, but about two months ago he waked up, he began to think, and he has been thinking ever since." And when I looked at the steady, earnest gaze of the boy, I felt that the light which had been kindled would, under proper direction, never be quenched. What an inspiration the thought gives that we can put a spark into a dull mind and lighten it up for all time. Now, what waked the boy up, what set him a-thinking ? are questions that may help the dull pupil, if it sets us to working out the problem. But it is a problem that we have all worked out, at least I hope we have. But is it not a problem that we have to work afresh every day of our lives ? and though we may vary the processes and formulæ in our method of solution, the answer comes out the same every time, and it is this : that dull face must be made to light up, that listless air give place to the eager look, and an honest, attentive pupil must be made to take the place of that shirker away off in the corner seat.

Will love do this ? Will work do this ? Is that all ? Well, yes, they include all. What makes the school ? Is it not the teacher, earnest and intelligent, gathering knowledge and experience as he goes, acting upon the school and the school reacting upon him ? This action and reaction leading him to excel the effort of yesterday, and making an ideal for to-morrow that will excel the effort of to-day. The pupils of such a school will give their life and enthusiasm to the teacher in return for the best efforts he has given to them.